

Administrative Directive Title: Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting	AD Number: 6.409.1	Adopted: June 2012 Former Descriptor: STU15
Policy References: Board Policy 6.409 – Child Abuse and Neglect	Revised: 4/19, 7/19, 11/24	

1 Murfreesboro City Schools is committed to the safety and well-being of all students. This procedure
 2 outlines the steps for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect, in compliance with State law. In
 3 compliance with Tennessee Code Annotated § 37-1-403 and § 37-1-605, all employees are required to
 4 report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

5 **DEFINITIONS¹**

- 6 1. Child Abuse: Harm or the risk of harm to a child’s health or welfare by a parent, guardian, or
 7 caretaker.
- 8 2. Neglect: The failure to provide for a child’s basic needs such as food, shelter, medical care, or
 9 supervision to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child’s health or safety. This
 10 may include, but is not limited to, abandonment, lack of supervision, lack of adequate nutrition
 11 that places the child below the normal growth curve, lack of shelter, or lack of medical or dental
 12 services that result in health-threatening conditions.
- 13 3. Physical Abuse: Non-accidental physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent, guardian, or
 14 caretaker. This also includes a parent’s failure to protect a child from another person who
 15 perpetuated physical abuse on a child.
- 16 4. Psychological Harm: A repeated pattern of caregiver behavior or extreme incident(s) that convey
 17 to children that they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered or only of value in
 18 meeting another’s needs and may include both abusive acts against a child and failure to act;
 19 neglectful behavior when age appropriate action is required for a child’s healthy development
 20 (e.g., when a child is shown no affection). It can occur as part of an extreme one-time incident
 21 but is usually chronic.
- 22 5. Mandatory Reporter: All employees of the school district are considered mandatory reporters and
 23 must report suspected child abuse or neglect.
- 24 6. Sexual Abuse: includes penetration or external touching of a child’s intimate parts, oral sex with
 25 a child, indecent exposure, or any other sexual act performed in a child’s presence for sexual
 26 gratification, sexual use of a child for prostitution, and/or the manufacture of child pornography.
 27 Child sexual abuse is also the willful failure of the parent to make a reasonable effort to stop
 28 child sexual abuse by another person.

29 **REPORTING PROCEDURE**

- 30 1. Recognizing Signs of Abuse or Neglect: Employees should be vigilant for signs of abuse or
 31 neglect, which may include physical injuries, changes in behavior, poor hygiene, frequent

¹ For more information about categories and definitions of abuse and neglect, see [Tennessee Department of Children’s Services Work Aid 1- CPS Categories and Definitions of Abuse/Neglect](#), Updated 8/2024

32 absences, or statements made by the child. If any signs or indicators of abuse or neglect are
33 observed, immediate action must be taken.

- 34 2. Immediate Reporting: Upon suspicion of child abuse or neglect, the employee must immediately
35 report their concerns:
 - 36 a. To the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services (DCS): Call the Tennessee Child
37 Abuse Hotline at 1-877-237-0004 or submit a report online at <https://apps.tn.gov/carat/>
 - 38 b. To Local Law Enforcement: Notify the school resource officer or local law enforcement
39 if it is suspected that there is immediate danger to the child.
 - 40 c. To School Administration: After reporting to DCS or law enforcement, the employee
41 must inform their principal or supervisor of the report made, unless the supervisor is the
42 suspected perpetrator, in which case the report should go directly to DCS and law
43 enforcement.

44 **CHILD ABUSE COORDINATORS**

45 Every school principal serves as a “Child Abuse Coordinator” for their school. The school principal is
46 responsible for designating an alternate child abuse coordinator at the school and communicating that
47 designation to all employees on an annual basis. The child abuse coordinator and the alternate child
48 abuse coordinator must:

- 49 1. Have access to an area providing privacy and access to a telephone for reporting suspected child
50 abuse and child sexual abuse;
- 51 2. Receive training in regard to:
 - 52 a. Mandatory reporting;
 - 53 b. Multidisciplinary protocols;
 - 54 c. Advocacy centers;
 - 55 d. The importance of limited interviews; and
 - 56 e. Signs, symptoms, or suspicions of child abuse;
- 57 3. Be available for school personnel to share information about suspected child abuse and child
58 sexual abuse;
- 59 4. Assist school personnel in reporting suspected child abuse and child sexual abuse to law
60 enforcement and to the department of children's services;
- 61 5. Serve as a liaison between the school, the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services, and law
62 enforcement in child abuse and child sexual abuse investigations;
- 63 6. Assist law enforcement and department personnel by sharing available information regarding
64 suspected child abuse and child sexual abuse, and by providing a private area within the school
65 for law enforcement and department personnel to meet with the child and the reporting school
66 personnel as a group or individually if required; and
- 67 7. Maintain confidential files in accordance with T.C.A. §§ 37-5-107 and 37-1-612 regarding all
68 reported suspicions of child abuse and child sexual abuse.

69 **CONFIDENTIALITY AND DOCUMENTATION**

70 All reports of child abuse or neglect are confidential. The identity of the reporting individual and the
71 details of the report must be kept private, except as required by law. The employee must document the
72 date and time of the report, the individual or agency to whom the report was made, the reporting number
73 assigned, and a brief summary of the concerns that led to the report.

74 **NO INVESTIGATIONS BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

75 School employees must not attempt to investigate the suspected abuse or neglect. The responsibility for
76 investigation lies solely with DCS or law enforcement.

77 **PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY**

78 Pursuant to T.C.A. § 37-1-410, any person who reports suspected child abuse or neglect in good faith is
79 immune from civil or criminal liability related to the report.

80 **FAILURE TO REPORT**

81 Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect may result in criminal charges, civil penalties, and
82 disciplinary action by the school district, up to and including termination.

83 **ANNUAL TRAINING**

84 All district employees will receive annual training on recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect.
85 New employees will receive this training within the first 30 days of employment.

86 **RESOURCES AND SUPPORT**

87 Employees who are uncertain about their reporting obligations or need additional support may contact
88 their school's designated Child Abuse Coordinator or their immediate supervisor for guidance.